

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-28. (canceled).

29. (new): Flooring element for a modular floor, comprising:

- a) a panel element; and
- b) a first and a second fastening system;

wherein the panel element in its turn comprises:

- a.1) a walk face arranged so as to form a part of the walk surface of the modular floor, and
 - a.2) a back face arranged in a position opposite to the walk face;
 - a.3) a first fixing side and a second fixing side, arranged transversally one to another;
 - a.4) a third fixing side, parallel to first fixing side, and a fourth fixing side parallel to the second fixing side;
 - a.5) longitudinal tongue and groove joints provided on each one of and along said four sides having the function to prevent the flooring elements from being disconnected in directions normal to the plan of the panel elements;
- wherein:
- the first fastening system is arranged for fastening the flooring element to an analogous second flooring element of the modular floor preventing its relative displacements at least along a first assembling direction (Y);

said first fastening system comprising first and second hooking recesses, arranged near the first fixing side, and first and second hooking brackets arranged near the third fixing side, the hooking recesses and the hooking brackets being arranged in such a way that the hooking brackets of a first modular flooring element are mechanically engageable with corresponding hooking recesses of a second modular flooring element so as to keep the first fixing side of the first modular element connected to the third fixing side of the second modular element, preventing their mutual displacements in the first assembling direction (Y);

and wherein:

- the second fastening system is arranged for fastening together the second fixing side of the flooring element and a fixing side of a third analogous flooring element of the modular floor, so as to prevent the relative displacements between the flooring element and the third analogous flooring element at least along a second assembling direction (X) transversal to the first assembling direction (Y);

said second fastening system comprising a hooking recess, arranged near the second fixing side, and a hooking bracket arranged near the fourth fixing side, the hooking recess and the hooking bracket being arranged in such way that the hooking bracket of a third modular flooring element is mechanically engageable with the corresponding hooking recess of the first modular flooring element so as to keep the second fixing side of the modular element connected with the fourth fixing side of the modular element, preventing their mutual displacements in the second assembling direction (X),

characterized in that,

said hooking brackets comprise a tongue made as a cantilever beam, fixed on the panel element so as to protrude out from the edge thereof and provided on their end with a bearing for allowing the hooking brackets to slide easier against and/or in the corresponding portion of the other analogous flooring element,

and in that

at least some of said brackets, are suitably articulated or elastic enough so as to allow a sufficient displacement of the respective bearings in a direction normal to the plan in which the panel element lies in order to allow the modular floor be easily assembled.

30. (new): Flooring element according to claim 29, wherein the first assembling direction (Y) is parallel or coplanar to the walk face and transversal to the first fixing side.

31. (new): Flooring element according to claim 29, wherein the second assembling direction (X) is parallel or coplanar to the walk face and transversal to the second fixing side.

32. (new): Flooring element according to claim 29, wherein the hooking bracket comprises a protrusion on which the bearing is fixed.

33. (new): Flooring element according to claim 32, wherein the bearing comprises one or more elements chosen from the following set:

- a rolling bearing;

- a friction bearing;
- a body made of self-lubricated material;
- a body made of polyamide (nylon, PA), polyethyleneterephthalate (PET), polytetrafluoroethylene (teflon, PTFE), acetic resin (POM, that is polyoxymethylene) and mixtures thereof;
- a body made of plastic material having a friction coefficient equal to + 30% of the friction coefficient of teflon or nylon;
- a body made of wood, glass, ceramic material, steel, bronze, brass, aluminum, cast iron, zinc and relative alloys, metal in general;
- a material having a coefficient of friction, with the material of the flooring element with which it is coupled, equal to or lower than 1;
- a material having a coefficient of friction, with the material of the flooring element with which it is coupled, equal to or lower than three times the friction coefficient of polyamide or of the polytetrafluoroethylene (teflon, PTFE);
- a substantially cylindrical body arranged so that its flanks engage and slide against and/or in the corresponding portion (44, 64) of the other analogous flooring element;
- a body having substantially smooth flanks and arranged for engaging and sliding against and/or in the corresponding portion of the other analogous flooring element;
- a pin arranged for engaging and slide against and/or in the corresponding zone of the other analogous flooring element;
- a pin having circular, oval or elliptic cross-sections;
- a pin the flanks of which form a surface of revolution.

34. (new): Flooring element according to claim 29, wherein the hooking recess has a substantially oblong shape.

35. (new): Flooring element according to claim 29, wherein the hooking recess comprises a first section extending transversally to the edge of the flooring element which is closest to the hooking recess.

36. (new): Flooring element according to claim 35, wherein the hooking recess comprises a second section extending longitudinally to the edge of the flooring element closest to the hooking recess.

37. (new): Flooring element according to claim 29, wherein the hooking recess forms a fold or elbow.

38. (new): Flooring element according to claim 29, comprising a support spacer arranged for supporting a panel element and spacing it from the surface on which the support spacer rests.

39. (new): Flooring element according to claim 38, comprising a plurality of support spacers, wherein at least some of the support spacers are fixed to the panel element by means of a threaded connection, and the threaded connection is arranged for allowing its respective support

spacer to come unscrewed during the use of the flooring element and to contact the surface on which other support spacers rest.

40. (new): Flooring element according to claim 38, wherein the support spacer is provided with a pad body which in its turn comprises a support end and an intermediate section connecting the support end and the panel element, and the support end is arranged for sliding on the surface on which the flooring element rests, with a friction smaller than the friction between such surface and the intermediate section.

41. (new): Method for providing a self-levelling floor, comprising the steps of:

- providing a plurality of flooring elements as claimed in claim 29;
- assembling said plurality of flooring elements so as to obtain a self-levelling floor.

42. (new): Method according to claim 41, comprising the following steps:

- providing a plurality of support spacers on the flooring element, fixing at least one support spacer to the panel element through a threaded connection;
- lubricating the threaded connection so as to allow its respective support spacer to come unscrewed during the use of the flooring element and contact the surface on which other support spacers rest.

43. (new): Method according to claim 42, comprising the steps of:

- causing the threaded connection of at least one support spacer of the self-levelling floor coming unscrewed, by producing vibrations in the self-levelling floor itself.

44. (new): Method for handling flooring elements, comprising the following steps:

- providing a flooring element having the features according to claim 29;
- providing a handling trolley, arranged for running on the surface on which the flooring element rests or has to rest, and provided with a handling protrusion arranged for engaging and lifting the back face of the flooring element;
- providing the handling protrusion under the flooring element, and engaging it with the back face.

45. (new): Method for handling flooring elements according to claim 44, comprising the step of handling the flooring element by engaging the handling protrusion with the back face of the flooring element.

46. (new): Method according to claim 44, comprising the step of engaging the handling protrusion with the flooring element through a male/female connection.